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ABSTRACT

This document describes Indiana's experience with the National History Day program, explores the potential for historical agency involvement, and presents partial results of a survey conducted of History Day coordinators in the state. Indiana History Day was established at the Social Studies Development Center and Indiana University (Bloomington) and picked up by the Indiana Historical Bureau when initial funding ran out in 1980. There are now fruitful collaborations between academic affiliates and historical agencies in both strong and weak programs throughout the country. For a strong organization, there should be a strong cooperative relationship between the state coordinator and the major social studies and history organization or organizations at the state level. Impediments to such collaborations are examined and successful programs are identified. A survey was distributed by the Indiana Historical Bureau and included questions from various state coordinators that had been submitted after the June 1988 national contest. Responses provided a general picture of low funding, few personnel and little staff support, little recognition, and a lack of knowledge among state coordinators about their district level programs. Most states have a long way to go to fulfill the potential that History Day offers for history instruction at all levels. National History Day is one of the best scholastic competitions available, but it must be institutionalized with mechanisms for solid, stable funding and support services to make it the best possible program serving the largest possible number of students and teachers. (GEA)

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Paper at the December 1988 Meeting of the American Historical Association
By Pamela J. Bennett, Director, Indiana Historical Bureau, Indianapolis

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National History Day: What Historians Can and Are Doing

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When I agreed last spring to present this paper, it seemed like a relatively straightforward proposition. Over the months since then, however, as I sat down to write the paper, the task seemed less and less straightforward. The proposal calls for me to "emphasize the value of the program from the viewpoint of a historical agency and what participation in National History Day has done for . . . [my] agency as well as for teachers and schools." Part of the complication arises from the fact that the Indiana Historical Bureau and its participation in National History Day in many ways is not really typical—we have had a much closer relationship to the national office than most states, and we have pursued an activist role in the conduct of the program. On the other hand, we are very typical in that we have been quite independent in the way we have offered History Day in Indiana and in the problems and shortcomings that we have experienced.

My dilemma derives from just those situations—our program is typical, but I know more than most people about the program and have committed much time to help improve it. History Day is a loose confederation and a volunteer dependent program with all the structural and financial weaknesses that are inherent in such an arrangement. That lack of rigid structure is also one thing that makes it attractive to many sponsors, but the national office still wrestles with a frustrating lack of communication from many state coordinators. There also is little potential for national quality control with an arrangement in which state coordinators have unlimited freedom and no real dependence upon the national office except the opportunity for their students to attend the national contest. Can we continue to have the luxury of this informality and still provide the best educational experience for our young people? I do not have an answer to that question, but I will add some information for discussion.

This presentation has three parts roughly designated as follows: the Indiana situation, a brief statement about the potential for historical agency involvement, and partial results of a

survey we conducted this fall of state coordinators. The Indiana Historical Bureau is a small state agency with12 state funded positions and a total budget of roughly 300 thousand dollars in appropriated funds. We also have the ability to receive grants and donations and to keep earned income from sales and plow it back into publications and educational programming.

Our primary legislative mandate is to publish sources on Indiana history and to encourage the study of Indiana history. Since its inception for Indiana's 1916 Centennial year, the Historical Bureau has had a series of well-regarded monographs and worked with the struggling private Indiana Historical Society and local historical groups around the state. In those earlier times, as now, there was frequent interaction with academic historians who were interested in and taught and wrote about state and regional history.

In encouraging the study of Indiana history the Historical Bureau also had become linked with the state education department although, as today, there seems to have been little or no financial support.

Since the 1940s the Bureau has cosponsored a premier junior history program and since the 1950s has produced various free and inexpensive historical pamphlets for teachers and students.

In 1976 when I became director of the Bureau, the agency was cut loose from the now extremely well-funded Indiana Historical Society, and I was given the job of determining the role in Indiana's historical community of this small underfunded state agency.

It soon became very clear that there was a desperate need in Indiana schools for materials and programs that could help

teachers teach and use state and local heritage topics, and the Bureau's traditional programs were a good starting point. In 1982 we joined forces to form the Building Bridges Between Schools and Communities program with, to some, an unlikely ally—a model arts-in-education program well-funded by the state education department and the Arts Commission. Our programs and our work with the Mid-South Humanities Project at Middle Tennessee State University in mid-1982 had provided new resources for local heritage education that arts-in-

education personnel recognized as models for their goals of working with local resources in an interdisciplinary approach, an approach that almost automatically generated heritage education programs. We and other historical and museum oriented agencies appreciated the solid local planning component of the arts-in-education program. This connection has endured strongly with our collaborative REACH Bus Program– Resources Educating in the Arts, Culture, and History– which began in 1984.

Significant grant funds from the Indiana Committee for the Humanities for development and an expanded in-house printing operation have enabled us to provide several other innovative items– the 1985 Folklore in the Classroom Workbook, the 1986 Abolitionist Movement in Indiana exhibit and catalog, and the primary source packets and resource guides of our BROADSIDES program, begun in 1985. Our junior history program has continued strongly in grades 4-12, although it has shown a large growth at the elementary level and a drop off in the senior high schools– the latter a trend that we are still trying to reverse.

In 1974 an innovative effort to bring an appreciation of history and the methods of historical research to both teachers and students was developed. David Van Tassel at Case Western Reserve University with the new History Day program wanted to bring college and university campuses closer to the schools as well as "to help students learn more about history through use of the content and methods of social studies, language, literature, and the arts." Unfortunately the implementation of growth regionally and then nationally created some problems. One initial oversight in expansion was the network of junior history programs that existed throughout the country generally located in historical agencies and typically functioning separately from the academic network through which History Day came into the states. At the time the junior history network throughout the country had been having a hard time with dropping interest and participation. Not surprisingly, there was resentment that these existing programs and their networks were being ignored and that there was new competition for the participation of fewer interested teachers and students.

Indiana History Day was established at the Social Studies Development Center, School

of Education, Indiana University, Bloomington. With strong funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities through the National History Day office district contests were set up at eleven campuses throughout the state, and the program grew quite reputably over the next three years. But then the NEH seed money was gone, there was no solid funding framework to hang it on, and IU would not pick up funding and continued administration.

When IU would not pick up Indiana History Day, I was approached to do so with my existing staff and no funds in place. My only education professional directed the junior history program, and any real cooperation was a lost cause; I did, however, make the Indiana Junior Historical Society a district-at-large for History Day and had materials sent to all sponsors. With a small grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. (which funded us on the promise that we would not return) and very interested support staff, the Bureau became the state sponsor of History Day in 1980—the first historical agency to do so. The Endowment funds were used primarily for public relations materials with major focus on a slide tape presentation for use by each district coordinator as well as the state office. The Indiana Historical Society gave us a moderate donation and continues to do so to purchase medal awards for all district contests and some awards for the state contest.

Although we still have seven university-based district contests, we have had several districts change to coordinators at historical or museum agencies—The Children's Museum, Conner Prairie, and two larger county historical societies with active education programs. All of these sponsors had existing strong partnerships with academic institutions in their areas which support their History Day programs. The state History Day contest continues at IU-Bloomington, strengthening ties with various academic departments that help with judging and workshops. The Indiana Council for the Social Studies and the Social Studies Development Center at the School of Education are especially supportive making IU involvement most desirable.

In 1980 I took on History Day because I believed it was a valuable asset for both the growing Bureau education program as well as for the teachers and students of Indiana. There

was an obvious need among the teacher and student population for substantive but interesting programs that could be used for interdisciplinary classroom instruction as well as provide anopportunity for extracurricular development. The junior history program provided fine opportunities for students, but it required a long term intensive commitment from teachers as club sponsors and often lacked solid content. History Day seemed to be a program that complemented the extreme sponsor demands of the junior program, had substantive research requirements, could be integrated with the curriculum, and also reinforced connections with academic historians and other education professionals. Our subsequent programs noted above fit well with History Day needs and provided wider access to arts educators, folklorists, language arts teachers and school systems that were already primed for cooperative ventures backed by community support.

Since our mandate focuses on state history, the Bureau has emphasized the choice of state and local history topics within each year's theme, but that was a natural connection since the use of primary sources is encouraged in researching entries. We even added a youth division for grades four and five because so many teachers asked for the opportunity to participate as a part of their Indiana studies emphasis. Our later BROADSIDES program became even more desirable as a companion offering by the agency since it demonstrates the interdisciplinary use of primary source documents in the classroom; History Day provides a natural outgrowth for students who want to undertake further research projects.

Lacking in the past have been appropriate materials for teachers to encourage them to use History Day as part of their standard curriculum; the newest supplement from the national office has solved that problem to a large extent. Now the problem of expansion still remains, and the key to that is still where it was a decade ago—with the teacher. We intend to address that aspect not only through printed materials, but also with workshops that show teachers how participation in History Day can enhance their ability to interest students and can help to add content to classroom presentations and build the skills of students.

We also plan to expand our district contests from eleven to fourteen in the near future,

build a more formal and stable district structure, and move more strongly to develop broader networks of community support among historical organizations, libraries, museums, and education, parent, social and fraternal groups. One of the most attractive features of the contest to parents and some teachers is the social interaction and skills that can be enhanced by contacts with students from other schools and with judges at the district and state contests. Smaller districts will enable district coordinators to communicate better with schools and shorten the travel time for contestants. In addition, more districts will allow more students to have the opportunity to participate in the state contest. This expansion of opportunity was one aspect of our present biennium budget request that has been recommended for funding by the State Budget Committee.

The addition in 1980 of History Day to our emerging education department was a good move because it preserved an excellent program for Indiana teachers and students. We have never, however, been able to bring History Day to full potential in the state; it should reach many more students and teachers than it does. Like other programs throughout the country, we have never had enough personnel or money to promote and develop the program adequately. In recent years, in addition, Indiana has leaped into the academic competition arena with funding from both the state education department and, yes, the Lilly Endowment! We are finally beginning to reach the academic coaches who work with these programs in schools; those coaches who know History Day recognize that it is a most valuable student competition but the time competition is stiff. One school corporation, however, has added a History Day coach!

Let's move to the subject of the potential for historical agency involvement in History Day. We now see fruitful collaborations of academic affiliation and historical agency affiliation in both strong and weak programs throughout the country. In my opinion, an ideal place for administrative offices for the state program is in the statewide historical agency that also traditionally emphasizes state history education. At the very least, there should be a strong co-

operative relationship between the state coordinator and the major organization or organizations at the state level.

At the state level especially the History Day program requires much administrative work and not insignificant funding and personnel time if the full benefits of History Day are to be made available through outreach to teachers and students. Most college and university history departments do not have statewide teacher networks and do not work with high schools, much less junior high schools. Such contact generally comes in junior divisions, admissions offices, or continuing education programs– unless the history department has been actively involved in teacher education as a part of its program. Most academic departments are also notoriously short of the support staff needed for a successful contest administration; some universities are able to use graduate students as the staff support. On the other hand, most historical agencies across the country– whether public or private– support ongoing educational programs and have established statewide networks, although the levels of funding and staff support are very diverse and most are generally moderate. Although very negative situations can occur as we found when the Rhode Island Historical Society cut back its total education functions as an economy move and the Arizona Historical Society dropped History Day sponsorship, generally there should be greater stability and more statewide resources available for a state History Day coordinated from a non-academic agency. Strong academic connections do remain crucial for a successful program.

Some familiar examples come to mind. The excellent program in Kansas run by the Historical Society has produced an increase in users of the Society's historical collections, and the Society has broadly recognized its winning students in member publications and by other means. The Minnesota Historical Society, although it will not coordinate the contest, conducts and lists History Day workshops among its extensive education offerings; the education department pamphlet is distributed statewide. The Texas Historical Society at the University of Texas uses its junior history network and workshop expertise to further the contest. The California Historical Society donates a large amount of money to California History Day as an

outreach mechanism. The Wyoming State Historical Society has just raised a $75,000 endowment for History Day through the sale of a limited edition print by the Wyoming Historical Foundation. And the examples could go on.

But there are elements common to most state programs. One is the lack of adequate funding. One is the lack of active involvement and funding via state departments of education. Another missing partner generally is the library community, which needs to be fully involved to support the research needs of students. In addition, the outreach needs of archival and manuscript organizations can be enhanced by promoting more use by History Day students and teachers. Historical organizations at all levels can benefit from and add to the History Day programs within their states. Only six states though have listed district contests at historical organizations or museums; five of those six states have historical agency based state programs. Schools are frequent sites for district contests; how much better it would be to bring students, teachers, and families to historical organization facilities when a campus is not available.

As the National History Day program expanded, the value of historical agency participation was realized in many states. Of the present forty-five state programs, for example, 23 (51%) are university based, 16 (36%) are historical agency based, and 6 (13%) have other sponsors, including the Constitutional Rights Foundation in California (the best funded program in the country), a school in New Hampshire, the school corporation in Washington, D. C., the department of education in Louisiana, and individuals with funding from the Rhode Island General Assembly and the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies.

Some sponsorships are a bit precarious although some state programs shift sponsorship and remain strong. However, it seems clear that National History Day has existed and still does exist in many locations only because of an individual interest. This certainly has been a recognized problem at the district level, where the loss of a coordinator generally means the loss of a contest, but it seems to be a factor at the state level also. After seeing the results of a survey that we conducted this fall, my new History Day coordinator commented that it is miraculous that National History Day has been as successful as it is.

The survey referred to was distributed by the Historical Bureau and included questions from various state coordinators that had been submitted after the June 1988 national contest. Frankly we know very little about National History Day around the country, and the survey was an initial attempt to elicit some information that we could all use in planning, publicity, solicitation of new state programs and coordinators, etc. The survey does not purport to be more than an indication of some trends; it was not well constructed or tested, led to confusing answers, and is taking a long time to compile in a useful form, but it has some value. A read through the responses provides a general picture of low funding, few personnel and little staff support, little recognition, and very little knowledge among state coordinators about their district level programs; most state programs have a long way to go to fulfill the potential that History Day offers for history instruction at all levels and for the valuable collaboration of academic historians with the educational and broader historical communities.

A few selected items will suffice here, but we will make more information available to the national office and coordinators in the near future.

We have responses from only 29 of the 45 state programs—a 64% return. Of those responses, 13 are from university based programs, 57% of the possible 23 respondents; 11 are from historical agency based programs, 69% of the possible 16 respondents; 5 are from other programs, 83% of the possible 6 respondents. All figures following refer to this sample.

One positive point is that the work of state coordinators at universities is viewed favorably by the academic colleagues of 67% of those coordinators; the balance of the university population is neutral, unknown, or ignores the work; no one indicated an outright negative stance among colleagues.

Most state coordinators responding occupy full-time paid positions (79%). Only 16 (55%) have History Day coordination as part of their job descriptions: of 13 numerical responses, 6, 46% specify only 10-20% of their time for History Day; 3, 23% specify 25% of their time; and only 4, 31% specify 50% or more of their time. Looking at the sample of 16 according

to type of sponsorship shows some interesting things. The sponsors are as follows when part of a job description is state coordination: historical agency, 11, 100% of the category returns; university, 3, 23% of the category returns; other, 2, 40% of the category returns. The percentage of time spent by these coordinators is as follows: historical agency—4 at 15% or less, 3 at 16-30%, and 2 at 50%; universities—one at 100% of unspecified part time, one at 25%, and one at 75%; other—one at 80% and one at 10%. A lot more needs to be known.

State coordinators specified professional affiliations as follows: AASLH, 31%; NCSS or an affiliate, 59%; a state or regional historical society, 41%; OAH, 24%; archival organizations, 7%; and museum organizations, 17%. AHA was mentioned by only one person, an apparent disservice to AHA's support for education.

In providing workshops for teachers, responses were yes for 21 states (72%) and no for 8 states (28%). By sponsor type positive the breakdown is historical agency, 9, 82% of the category returns; university, 7, 54% of the category returns; other, 5, 100% of the category returns. Again, really meaningful results require more input, but there is an oblvious trend.

Finally, a few budget figures. Of the 29 state budgets reported, 14 or 48% are under $5000; 4 or 14% are $15,000 and up, with California topping out at $43,550. The average figures are remarkably similar: the average university based budget is $6200, the average historical agency is $6905, the average other with California is $13,770 and without California is $6825. The primary source of funds is the sponsoring agency budget and various fundraising techniques, from bake sales to trust funds, but there is heavy dependence on student fees and t-shirt sales; 12 states (41%) note some form of private foundation support. Six states indicate that the sponsor is the sole funding agent—of those, four are historical agencies.

We asked a final question about the presence of other history related competitions in states; obviously, we are not the only game in town: 20 state coordinators (69%) know of competitions; 3 do not know; and 6 indicate there are no other competitions. Where there are other competitions, 11 state coordinators (55%) indicate that there is cooperation or coordination.

In closing, I would like to affirm my individual and agency support for National History Day and my confidence that it is one of the best scholastic competitions available. We need, however, to work to institutionalize it in all states with a mechanism for solid, stable funding and support services at the local, state, and national levels. To do that we need increased support from both the broader historical community and academic historians; but we need to tap into the professional educational hierarchy and other support mechanisms. Obviously, History Day can exist on a shoestring and serve a large population, but we all have a stake in making it the best possible program serving the largest possible number of students and teachers. That goal still remains to be fulfilled.